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SUBJECT: U.N. U/SYG HOLMES BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN KENYA

¶1. SUMMARY. On February 25 Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes briefed the Security Council on his recent mission to Kenya and cautioned that the current situation is evolving into a protracted humanitarian crisis.

Holmes stressed the need to address the root causes of the violence and deep-seated ethnic grievances. Following Holmes' briefing, members met in closed session. They thanked Holmes for his work and praised the ongoing mediation efforts led by Kofi Annan. None disagreed with Holmes' analysis that the risk of a return to violence is increasing as the stalemate over the political negotiations continues. Council members also called upon both sides to put the interests of the country first. END SUMMARY.

--CURRENT SITUATION--

¶2. Holmes' stated objectives of the mission were to reaffirm the U.N.'s support for the Kenyan people and to assess the humanitarian situation on the ground. He summarized the humanitarian impact of the post-election violence: 1,000 people dead, 12,000 Kenyan refugees in Uganda, at least 300,000 displaced, and an estimated 500,000 in need of emergency assistance. Holmes reported that most of the basic humanitarian needs in the displacement camps and sites are being met and commended the Kenyan Red Cross Society (KRCS), which has led the response. Holmes stressed that international efforts have been supporting and complementing Kenya's national response capacity. However, Holmes cautioned that the capacity of the KRCS to respond in the medium and longer-term is limited and may not be sustainable.

The KRCS will need international support to continue to meet humanitarian needs in a protracted crisis situation.

¶3. According to Holmes, heightened ethnic awareness and fears have permeated the country and are fueling polarization. As a result, the current displacement crisis will remain even if a political agreement is reached. Holmes referred to the post-election violence and resulting humanitarian emergency as an "unexpected crisis", but then asked whether it should have been anticipated. He stated that long-standing grievances over land, poverty, and economic inequalities must be addressed, and that political manipulation of land and tribal issues must be prevented through constitutional and electoral reform. Holmes repeatedly stressed the need to hold those responsible for the violence accountable.

¶4. Holmes also noted the regional implications of crisis due to Kenya's role as East Africa's main transport hub. He underscored that more than 80 percent of Uganda's total imports for 2007, and all of Rwanda's exports, passed through Mombassa. Countries throughout the region, as well as related humanitarian operations, are dependent on Kenya's ports.

--NEXT STEPS--

¶5. Holmes reported that the U.N's Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan is currently 60 percent funded, and will be revised in the coming weeks to respond to the protracted crisis. The U.N. is planning a year ahead and working on action and contingency plans with KRCS. Holmes stated that the U.N. will also consider reorienting development programs to address the country's underlying social and economic inequalities.

¶6. Holmes stressed that without a quick resolution to the political crisis, "the risk of a fresh surge in violence, more displacement and further polarization of society is very high. The humanitarian consequences of this could dwarf anything we have seen so far." He urged continued support from the international community for solutions to both the short-term political problems and the long-term issues.

--SECURITY COUNCIL RESPONSE--

¶7. South Africa and Burkina Faso both stressed the threat to the region if Kenya falls apart. Burkina Faso cited the fundamental role of African Union countries in resolving the crisis. Italy voiced support for the principle of African ownership in resolving the crisis. The fragility of the

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current situation and the importance of holding those responsible for the violence accountable were echoed by several members. France went further by suggesting that an international commission might be needed if accountability is not a priority. Costa Rica noted that peace cannot be built without first addressing the issues of justice, and cautioned against adding Kenya to the long list of countries requiring international peacekeepers. Belgium called on the Security Council to give a sign of encouragement to both parties in an effort to hasten a political resolution. Belgium also noted that in-depth reforms are needed. Several members underscored the importance of the U.N. remaining active in supporting a political solution.

¶8. Applauding actions undertaken to address the needs of the displaced, USUN called upon the Kenyan Government to intensify cooperation in the humanitarian response. Political Minister Counsellor reiterated the importance of real power sharing, not just the illusion. Reaffirming support for Annan's efforts, he also commended the international humanitarian response as well as the work of the KRCS and the Kenyan people.

KHALILZAD